

Appendix A - Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities

Introduction

The National Forest Management Act implementing regulations prescribe a ten-step planning process. The first step of the process is to identify and evaluate public issues, management concerns, and resource use and development opportunities [CFR 219.12(b)]. Regulatory direction is augmented and clarified in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, section 4.19(a). This appendix describes the process used and the results of that step. Included are the following topics:

1. The identification process for issues, concerns, and opportunities.
2. Selected issues, concerns, and opportunities.
3. Consultation with others.

Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities Identification Process

The issues, concerns, and opportunities identification process on the Routt National Forest was initiated in March 1991 with the decision to revise the Forest Plan. Discussions with Routt National Forest employees and various members of the public occurred from March until September 1991. A work plan, which included a public participation strategy, was approved by the Rocky Mountain Regional Forester in September 1991. The objectives of the public participation strategy were to:

1. Involve the public in an interactive process where they were encouraged to provide information, comments, and points of view that would strengthen decision making and lead to better land and resource management on the Forest.
2. Encourage dialogue with the public concerning the scientific, environmental, social, and economic factors that relate to land and resource management planning.
3. Build ownership with the public for the planning process.
4. Keep public interest and involvement active through meetings and newsletters.

During initial scoping, four techniques were used to identify areas of the 1983 Plan that needed change. These techniques included distributing newsletters, conducting public meetings/open houses, writing individual letters, and individual personal meetings or phone conversations. A full record of these contacts is on file and available for review at the Forest Service office in Laramie, WY. Individuals and groups who were contacted during initial scoping are listed in the section "Consultation with Others" on page 6.

Mailing List/Newsletters - The Forest mailing list was used initially to contact individuals and groups. This list contains over 800 names of individuals and groups who have expressed interest in the Routt Forest Plan revision process and is updated periodically. Two Forest newsletters were mailed. The newsletters asked for initial issue identification, informed the

public of issue analysis and results, and provided general information regarding the Forest Plan revision.

Public Meetings/Open Houses - Open houses to discuss and receive revision topics were held in six different locations during spring 1992. These locations included Walden, Steamboat Springs, Craig, Yampa, and Kremmling, Colorado. Follow-up meetings were held in fall 1993 in the same six locations, with an additional meeting in Saratoga, Wyoming. A primary topic of discussion was how the issues were used to develop alternatives. Notification of meeting times and locations were published in local newspapers and on local radio stations. A meeting to explain the revision process was held spring 1995 in Clark, Colorado for the North Routt Citizens Group.

Personal Meetings, Phone Calls - On occasion, individuals and groups met in person or over the phone with Forest Service officials to discuss their concerns. Concerns were documented and put into the issue identification process.

Letters - After the initial open houses in spring 1992, 104 comment letters were received. These letters identified issues for Forest Plan revision.

The issues, concerns, and opportunities were analyzed. First, a system was developed to organize, summarize, and document the comments received. Next, the significance of the issue was established. Finally, a decision was made on how each issue, concern, and opportunity would be addressed in the Revised Plan.

In addition to the techniques described above, other Forest Service plans, other federal agency plans, state and local government plans, and local planning commission studies were reviewed for known or potential issues and concerns. They included the following:

Forest Service

- Black Hills National Forest Draft Revised Plan.
- Bridger-Teton National Forest Plan.
- Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest Plan.
- Medicine Bow National Forest Plan.
- Rio Grande National Forest Plan.

Bureau of Land Management

- Craig District (Colorado) Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement.

Rocky Mountain Region direction for forest plan revision states that revisions are based on "need for change." Twenty-eight separate issues, concerns, and opportunities were defined by the Forest interdisciplinary team, based on public and internal comments provide during initial scoping.

The issues, concerns, and opportunities were grouped into five categories:

1. **Revision Topics:** Includes topics for which resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perception have created a need for change in the 1983 Plan. These topics would generally be significant amendments because their resolution could change management area direction over large areas of the Forest, affect the mix of goods and services provided, and impact other

decisions made in forest planning. Generally there is no consensus on how to resolve the issue of this type.

2. **Other Revision Items:** Represents inadequate or out-of-date forest plan direction. Addressing these items would not require a significant amendment to the 1983 Plan. There is general consensus on how to resolve the issues, and they can be addressed by rewriting the 1983 Plan standards and guidelines.
3. **Amendment Topics:** Includes topics under analysis. A decision is expected prior to completion of the revision.
4. **Implementation Topics:** Includes topics for which existing direction is adequate. Existing direction may have not been fully implemented because of inadequate funding or other reasons.
5. **Topics Outside the Scope of Forest Plan Revision:** Includes topics regional or national in scope or outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service.

The Forest documented the initial issues, concerns, and opportunities in the Purpose and Need/Planning Criteria document and identified the issues to be analyzed in the Analysis of Management Situation (AMS). The report was approved by the Regional Forester and was shared with the public to inform them of the issues to be carried forward for further analysis in the revision process.

Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities - Revision Topics

Issues, concerns, and opportunities were grouped within the five revision topics. The revision topics are: Biological Diversity, Roadless Areas/Wilderness, Timber Suitability/Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ), Recreation/Travel Management, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Biological Diversity - This revision topic is concerned with the type, quantity, and distributions necessary to ensure long-term productivity, biological diversity, and ecosystem health. It also addresses the listed and potential threatened, endangered, and sensitive species found on the Forest. The following issues are included in the biological diversity revision topic:

- Landscape management
- Ecosystem health
- Fragmentation
- Old growth
- Aspen
- Research natural areas
- Human intervention
- Riparian areas
- Threatened, endangered, and sensitive species

Roadless Areas/Wilderness - This revision topic is concerned with what roadless areas will be recommended for wilderness and the type of land management in roadless areas not recommended for wilderness. The following issues are included in the roadless area/wilderness revision topic:

- Roadless areas/wilderness.
- Wilderness recommendation.
- Roadless area reallocation.

Timber Suitability/Allowable Sale Quantity - This revision topic is concerned with identifying areas of the Forest suitable for timber production and identifying the volume of timber that can be supplied from forest lands to local markets. The following issues are included in the timber suitability/ASQ revision topic:

- Timber suitability/ASQ.
- Silvicultural management methods.
- Financial efficiency of timber management program.

Recreation Opportunities/Travel Management - This revision topic is concerned with the range, mix, and emphasis of recreation opportunities while ensuring resource protection. The following issues are included in the recreation opportunities/travel management revision topic:

- Mix of recreation opportunities/travel management
- Wildlife disturbance
- Travel restrictions

Wild and Scenic Rivers - The wild and scenic rivers revision topic is concerned with identifying any rivers on the Forest that are eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The issue included in this revision topic is:

- Eligible rivers

Initial drafts of the revision topics were completed in the fall of 1992. Minor changes occurred as the analysis progressed and new knowledge of the topics was acquired. The revision topics were finalized in summer 1993 with the completion of the AMS. The five revision topics are presented in Chapter 1 of the FEIS and represent the major issues requiring resolution in the Revised Plan. Each revision topic had varied emphasis in the alternatives design and formed the difference between the alternatives. Each alternative had a different emphasis and the emphasis of the revision topics under each varied accordingly.

Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities - Other Revision Items

The issues, concerns, and opportunities identified as "other revision topics", are addressed by developing and improving forest-wide standards and guidelines and same in all alternatives. For example, rural development forest-wide goals and objectives were improved and do not vary between alternatives. Programmatic direction was also improved in Chapter 4 (Monitoring and Evaluation) of the Revised Plan. This resulted in needed changes to the monitoring and evaluation program. The "other revision topics" include:

- Land exchanges

- Cultural resources
- Fisheries
- Wilderness management
- Monitoring
- Rural development
- Noxious weeds

Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities Not Addressed in the Revision

The following categories of issues, concerns, and opportunities are addressed to some degree in the updating of standards and guidelines. The rationale for them not becoming revision topics is explained below.

Amendment Topic - This topic did not appear because analysis had started and a decision is expected prior to the completion of the revision. The only amendment topic incorporated into the Revised Plan is oil and gas leasing.

Implementation Topics - These topics are implementable. However, due to inadequate funding or other reasons, they have not been fully implemented. No clear need for change has been identified.

- Animal damage control
- Air quality
- Scenic quality
- Minerals
- Water quality
- Water development
- Municipal watersheds
- Grazing
- Timber sale packaging
- Thinning of second growth stands
- Potential winter sports sites
- Lake Catamount Ski Area
- Utility corridors
- Insect and disease control
- Interagency cooperation

Outside The Scope of Forest Plan Revision - Wolf reintroduction is outside of the authority of the Forest Service. Comments received were forwarded to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the appropriate agency to lead resolution of this issue.

Public Issues Guide The Planning Process

NFMA regulations define forest planning as an issue-driven process. Public issues, management concerns, and opportunities to resolve them guided the interdisciplinary team through the entire process. Issues were essential for determining the range of biological, social, and economic constraints to incorporate into the alternatives to resolve the problems identified. Also, the issues formed the criteria for selecting the preferred alternative and helped the decision maker determine public benefits. Public issues influenced the planning process and formed the basis for the revision.

The public can evaluate how the revision process responds to public issues. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) provided the public with the opportunity to comment prior to preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the selection of an alternative to be implemented as the new Forest Plan. The FEIS contains the information considered by the decision maker and gives the public an opportunity to evaluate it.

Alternatives were developed to address and resolve the issues. How well each alternative responds to an issue depends on the benefits accrued to public interest groups and individuals from that alternative. Because of the interrelationships among forest resources, a gain to one individual or group may be a loss to another. The trade-offs among the various interests are considered in identifying the preferred alternative. Trade-offs within and between issues are described in qualitative and quantitative terms in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

Consultation With Others

Initial scoping with the public to define issues was described earlier. Consultations with individuals, other agencies, and organizations have continued throughout the revision process. The nature of the contacts were determined through the public participation strategy and the NFMA planning regulations. The contacts included individual citizens, public interest groups, other government agencies, Indian Tribes, businesses, industries, state and local government, and landowners.

The purpose of the contacts was to inform individuals and organizations about the revision process; to coordinate with other federal, state, and local government; and to solicit information for use in various stages of the planning process. Many of the contacts improved the definition of the issues, concerns, and opportunities and provided valuable resource data for development of the Revised Plan.

The following individuals, groups, and organizations were contacted using one of the methods described in the issues, concerns, and identification process (newsletters, public meetings, etc.).

- Routt National Forest Stewardship Council
- Routt County Commissioners
- Colorado Environmental Coalition
- Bureau of Land Management
- Rocky Mountain National Park
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jackson County Commissioners
- Moffat County Commissioners
- Middle Park Stock Growers

- Routt National Forest Range Permittees
- Louisiana-Pacific Corporation
- Grand County Commissioners
- Intermountain Forest Industry Association
- Biodiversity Legal Foundation
- Alpine Land Company
- Jackson County Coalition
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation
- Friends of the Bow/Native Ecosystems Council
- North Routt Citizens in Clark
- Colorado Congressional Delegation
- Walden Town Board of Trustee's
- Colorado Department of Highways
- Bureau of Land Management, Craig District
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Grand Junction, Colorado
- Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs
- Rocky Mountain Oil and Gas Association
- Steamboat Ski and Resort Corporation
- Lake Catamount Development Corporation
- National Park Service - Dinosaur National Monument
- USDA Forest & Range Experiment Station, Fort Collins, Colorado
- Nature Conservancy, Boulder, Colorado
- NW Colorado Council of Government
- Environmental Law Society - Boulder, Colorado
- Residents of Jackson County and surrounding communities through Walden, Colorado open house
- Residents of Rio Blanco, Routt, and Garfield Counties and surrounding communities at Yampa, Colorado open house
- Residents of Grand, and Routt Counties and surrounding communities at Kremmling, Colorado open house
- Residents of Moffat and Routt Counties and surrounding communities at Craig, Colorado open house

- Residents of Routt County and surrounding Communities at Steamboat Springs, Colorado open house

The DEIS was published in February of 1996. The comment period was extended to 135 days. 299 comment letters were received. Those comments and Forest Service responses are in Appendix K.

Comments were used to guide changes made between the DEIS and the FEIS and in formulation of the ROD.

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